

STATEMENT OF FRED C. IKLE, DIRECTOR
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Before the Subcommittee on
International Security and Scientific Affairs
of the Committee on International Relations,
United States House of Representatives
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Mr. Chairman, I welcome the opportunity to appear today before you and the other members of the subcommittee to discuss a question in which I have had a long-standing interest, the question of first-use of nuclear weapons.

In talking about first-use of nuclear weapons, it must be made clear that we are talking about a defensive resort to nuclear arms in the event of an overwhelming conventional attack that U.S. allied forces cannot turn back with conventional arms alone. I am not at this point speaking of a strategic "first strike" designed to eliminate the retaliatory capability of Soviet strategic forces, a point addressed later in my statement.

Over the last 25 years there has been a significant, albeit slow, development in U.S. attitudes and doctrines regarding such first-use of nuclear weapons. This development can be fairly summarized as a narrowing of possible events for which U.S. policy envisages first-use. Thus, in his 1954 message to Congress, President Eisenhower said: "A wide variety of atomic weapons -- considered in 1946 to be mere

possibilities of a distant future -- have today achieved conventional status in the arsenals of our armed forces." By contrast, in a press conference in 1971, President Nixon explicitly ruled out the suggestion -- he called it "rather ridiculous" -- that our use of air power in Indo-China might include tactical nuclear weapons.

Two formal steps -- one in 1971; the other in 1974 -- are illustrative of this narrowing of first-use contingencies.

On May 12, 1971, the United States Government through its ratification of additional Protocol II to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, the so-called Treaty of Tlatelolco, undertook not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against Latin American states party to the Treaty's nuclear-free-zone arrangement. In adhering to Protocol II, the U.S. submitted a formal statement of understanding that:

The United States Government would have to consider that an armed attack by a contracting party, in which it was assisted by a nuclear-weapon state, would be incompatible with the contracting party's corresponding obligations under Article I of the treaty.

In May 1974, in answering Swedish questions about low-yield nuclear weapons, the U.S. Delegate to the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament stated:

In response to speculation that further development of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons would blur the present distinction between conventional and nuclear weapons, I wish to state categorically that the U.S. Government has no intention whatever to treat such tactical systems as interchangeable with conventional arms. We fully appreciate that the distinction, or "firebreak", between nuclear and non-nuclear arms is a major factor in preventing nuclear warfare, and we will not act to erode this distinction.

But while we have been moving in a positive way to reduce the number of possible first-use contingencies, we do not believe that an unqualified no-first-use undertaking by the United States is advisable. At the May 1975 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, many non-aligned States called for commitments by the Nuclear Powers never to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against Non-Nuclear-Weapon States. The U.S. and the other nuclear powers opposed such an undertaking. The U.S. noted that mutual security arrangements have alleviated the security concerns of many Non-Nuclear-Weapon States and that non-use assurances could undercut such commitments to Allies, thus raising concerns about

their security, and thereby increasing their incentive to acquire independent nuclear weapon capabilities. Pointing out that the principal security concern of Non-Nuclear-Weapon States is not the threat of nuclear attack by the US, USSR, or the UK, but rather the possibility of conventional armed conflict with neighboring Non-Nuclear Weapon-States, the US expressed doubt at the Conference that a worldwide non-use commitment would serve as a powerful incentive to renounce nuclear weapons.

Further, we are faced -- at least for several years -- with certain significant imbalances in conventional strength in areas where we have important commitments: I refer in particular to NATO's central front. Rectification of this imbalance in Europe is being sought both through the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction negotiations and by U.S. and Allied conventional defense improvements. In this context, it must be remembered that our principal goal is the deterrence of war altogether, and that NATO's doctrine of potential first-use can enhance this deterrence. *of course*

yes
X
In the longer term, under appropriate circumstances and in particular regions of the world, it is possible that a non-use pledge in conjunction with an effective nuclear-weapon-free zone arrangement might supplement the security of the Non-Nuclear-Weapon States concerned, as did the Treaty of Tlatelolco, to which I earlier referred.

As we consider any such non-use undertaking, however, we must keep in mind that our Allies might be concerned that such assurances could lead to even broader non-use undertakings. Among the most geographically exposed of our Allies are major industrial nations which in the interest of global stability, have decided not to develop nuclear weapons, although they unquestionably possess the technical and industrial resources to do so. The willingness of such nations to forswear nuclear weapons depends to a considerable extent upon their continued faith in the reliability of their alliance with the United States.

Yet, our refusal to renounce the first-use of nuclear weapons should not be misunderstood. It is not a belligerent posture. It does not propose that nuclear weapons would be used except in the most extreme circumstances where large-scale military aggression threatened the vital interests of the United States and its Allies. Indeed, one of our principle security objectives is to reduce reliance on nuclear forces by strengthening our conventional military posture, and particularly by redressing the imbalance in conventional forces on NATO's central front. If the imbalance in conventional arms can be reduced over the years to come -- through improvements in US and Allied conventional defenses and through arms control arrangements -- our reliance on first-use could become less important. Such a trend would be all to the good.

For these reasons, Mr. Chairman, I urge that the Congress reject those proposed resolutions before you which would explicitly require the U.S. to forswear the first-use of nuclear weapons, namely House Resolution 11, House Joint Resolutions 533, 534, 535, 536, 575, 630, 713 and 723.

We appreciate the spirit underlying House Joint Resolutions 618, 626 and 714. It is in fact U.S. policy not to seek to develop a disarming first strike capability. However, we believe the proposed resolutions would be unhelpful for two reasons. First, they fail to recognize that the development of a disarming first strike capability is contrary to existing U.S. policy and suggest, erroneously, that the U.S. is currently seeking to achieve such a capability. Second, by failing to distinguish between a disarming first strike capability and other kinds of capabilities against military forces, the resolution could be read as condemning, without distinction, all strategic capabilities for attacking military targets.

Mr. Chairman, this completes my statement. I would welcome any questions you may have.